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INFO RUCNMR/MERCOSUR COLLECTIVE
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RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0225

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/BSC AND ISN/WMDT
DEPT FOR DS/CC AND DS/IP/WHA
DOE FOR NNSA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ENRG](#) [IAEA](#) [KNNP](#) [KCSA](#) [TRGY](#) [ASEC](#) [AR](#)

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: SMALL AMOUNT OF CESIUM 137 IS STOLEN
FROM OIL COMPANY WAREHOUSE

1. (SBU) In the early hours of February 19, two armed individuals robbed a lead container holding the equivalent of 2.5 curies of cesium 137 from the warehouse of Baker Atlas, a U.S. company involved in oil exploration in Neuquen, in the South of Argentina. The assailants entered the scene shortly after 4 a.m. and overpowered the only guard. According to police sources, they asked the guard for the keys to a specific sector where the radioactive material was stored. Stolen was a 45 kg lead box holding a radioactive element the size of a cigarette. The box is opened with a special key, which the thieves did not have, according to police. The radioactive material is used by Baker Atlas to carry out oil-well logging.

2. (SBU) Post contacted Gabriel Terigi, Head of Institutional Relations at the ARN (Nuclear Regulatory Agency), for details on the ARN's planned response. Terigi was in a meeting about this very incident when contacted. He told us that the ARN had sent a team to Neuquen as part of its response system for nuclear emergencies. The team was carrying detection equipment as well as equipment to handle and confine the source if necessary. Provincial police and the Gendarmerie had been informed. The ARN was also preparing its report to the IAEA. Terigi noted that the ARN was responding to this incident according to established procedures, and that various response systems had been activated throughout the day. He pledged to keep us informed of developments as they occur.

3. (U) Post will continue to communicate about this incident with GOA authorities and follow up with additional reporting on February 20.
KELLY